

# Top Brain Foods

1. Good nutrition for the brain should be a diet low in saturated fats and sugars, and high in lean protein-rich **foods**, legumes, healthy fats, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These foods provide nutrients essential for protecting and nourishing the brain, as well as manufacturing brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters that are involved in regulating sleep, appetite and mood. Certain foods play a role in preserving brain function. A healthy diet goes a long way in optimizing brain **health**.

## Protein Foods and Legumes

2. Consume eggs. They are the best food source of choline, which is essential for making acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter, or chemical brain messenger, important for memory. Eat moderate amounts of very lean beef, lamb and turkey. These meats are excellent sources of protein and B-vitamins. Turkey is rich in tryptophan, a precursor to the brain neurotransmitter serotonin. Lamb is rich in selenium. Selenium is a potent antioxidant. It works together with other nutrients to help prevent brain cell damage. Include legumes in your diet. They are rich in Vitamin B1 (thiamin) which helps convert food to energy and is also needed to synthesize acetylcholine. Make all beans a staple in your diet for overall health.

## Foods Rich in Healthy Fats

3. Consume more Omega-3 fatty acids. The brain is 60 percent fat (structurally). For proper brain cell function, a diet rich in Omega-3 fats, including walnuts, flaxseeds, canola oil and cold water fish, is very important. According to a 2004 article published by the "Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging," fats (especially Omega-3 fatty acids), were the first of the dietary factors (nutrients) to show an effect on the brain's structure and function. Yellowfin tuna is a good choice because it is rich in both Omega-3 fats and Vitamin B3 (niacin), offering double protection against cognitive decline. These foods also provide a good source of the antioxidant nutrient Vitamin E. Vitamin E works against oxidative damage of the fat components of organs and tissues (such as the brain).

## Fruits and Vegetables

4. Nutrients found in fruits, such as cranberries, blueberries, strawberries and grape

juice, may help preserve cognitive function and improve working memory. They are anti-oxidant rich, protecting the brain from free radical damage. Berries are a good source of potassium, folate, riboflavin, Vitamin B6, magnesium and copper, all important nutrients for brain health. Eat more spinach (and sea vegetables like kelp) to lessen brain damage from strokes and other neurological disorders. Potatoes are a great source of carbohydrates, necessary for energy as the brain operates almost exclusively on glucose (broken down from carbohydrates). Potatoes are full of Vitamin B6. Vitamin B6 is necessary to produce a class of neurotransmitters that influence behavior, such as serotonin.

## **Whole Grains and Milk**

5. Consume magnesium-rich whole grains, such as quinoa, barley and brown rice. Magnesium helps relax blood vessels, playing a role in preventing the constriction and dilation associated with migraine headaches. Increased intake of magnesium may reduce the frequency of both tension and migraine headaches. Quinoa (as well as skim milk) is also a good source of riboflavin (Vitamin B2), which helps convert food to energy within cells. Another role of Vitamin B2 (riboflavin) is to increase blood flow to brain cells.